

NON-AMERICAN SACEUR: WIN-WIN FOR NATO AND THE UNITED STATES

BY

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USAWC CLASS OF 2011

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 17-03-2011		2. REPORT TYPE Strategy Research Project		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Non-American SACEUR: Win-Win for NATO and the United States				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Lieutenant Colonel Louis B. Rago II				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Colonel Tarn D. Warren Department of Military Strategy, Planning, and Operations				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College 122 Forbes Avenue Carlisle, PA 17013				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution A: Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT The intent of this paper is to explore the implications of the United States relinquishing its monopoly on the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) position within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The paper analyzes and assesses the implications of this proposition within the context of meeting the objectives stated in the November 2010 version of the NATO Strategic Concept. Accepting the premise that United States participation and leadership in strengthening our current alliances and international organizations is essential to American national security, it is likely albeit counterintuitive that a relinquishment of the SACEUR position would facilitate greater cohesiveness and effectiveness in NATO. Further, the paper attempts to prove that despite relinquishing the monopoly on the SACEUR billet neither the world position, stature, nor power of the United States would diminish in any tangible manner. Acknowledging that NATO stands at a the crossroads of significant importance and potential irrelevance, a bold move by the United States may very well be the catalyst for strengthening the alliance to meet the demands of the future while achieving its own national objectives stated in the American National Security Strategy and the NATO Strategic Concept.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS EU, Command Structure, Anti-Americanism					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UNLIMITED	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 26	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Lieutenant Colonel Louis B. Rago II
TITLE: Non-American SACEUR: Win-Win for NATO and the United States
FORMAT: Strategy Research Project
DATE: 17 March 2011 WORD COUNT: 5,298 PAGES: 26
KEY TERMS: EU, Command Structure, Anti-Americanism
CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

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NON-AMERICAN SACEUR: WIN-WIN FOR NATO AND THE UNITED STATES

Only control over the unbridled exercise of American power could bring a measure of serenity to these unsettled relationships. Rather than seek to maximize its autonomy in the short run, the United States could willingly bind itself, sacrificing short-run gains for the creation of an international milieu from which it would in the long run profit, perhaps disproportionately.

—David M. Edelstein & Ronald R. Krebs¹

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is arguably the single most important international body to the United States. For more than sixty years, the United States and her NATO allies have dedicated themselves to mutual security, enduring peace, and shared values. In the wake of the recent Lisbon Summit and the resulting NATO Strategic Concept, the member nations have recommitted themselves to evolving the Alliance to the challenges of the future and maintaining a continued relevance. While this is clearly an important step toward strengthening the Alliance, its continued relevance in Europe and across the globe depends upon greater coherence and cooperation between the member states.

The events of recent years have illustrated stress fractures in NATO that have put into question the strength of the partnership. Much of the reason for this perceived separation between the closest of allies lies at the feet of the United States. President Obama articulated this point during his first address to NATO on April 3, 2009 in Strasbourg, France. “In America there’s a failure to appreciate Europe’s leading role in the world...there have been times America’s shown arrogance, been dismissive even derisive.”² This attitude has bred an “anti-Americanism that is at once casual and

insidious.”³ Countering this destructive perception and reversing the divisions between the United States and her Allies is essential to the vitality of NATO.

This paper offers a first-step toward countering a pervasive anti-American climate that hinders the effectiveness, if not the long term health of the North Atlantic partnership. A meaningful gesture to this end would be the United States voluntarily foregoing the continued monopoly on the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR) post. Taking this bold, self-effacing step has significant potential for strengthening the Alliance and improving perceptions of America and relations around the world. Further, relinquishing the traditional hold on the SACEUR post can be accomplished with ease and at no cost to American power, interests and standing on the world stage. To the contrary, this action offers the opportunity for a “win-win” by improving both the cohesion of the Alliance and American perceptions in Europe and abroad.

A New NATO

With the recent conclusion of the NATO Summit in Lisbon, it seems that nearly two decades of debate over the future relevance of the North Atlantic partnership have been laid to rest. The resultant Strategic Concept, released in late November 2010, establishes the priorities and vision of a 21st Century NATO. The preface of the document reaffirms the founding tenet of mutual defense, but also commits NATO to global security interests.⁴ In the words of NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, “NATO has adopted an action plan which sets out concrete steps it will take in order to put in place a renewed Euro-Atlantic Alliance, ready to meet the threats of the 21st Century.”⁵

The threats that the NATO Strategic Concept envisions cross a broad spectrum of possibilities. Beyond the collective defense commitments in accordance with Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, NATO has embraced an active approach to enhancement of international security beyond the borders of the member states.⁶ Dramatic changes in the strategic landscape have not changed the fundamental promise of the treaty; rather the changes have required an acknowledgement that new threats demand a response from NATO and within an Alliance context.⁷ Therefore, it appears that future commitments, like that of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, will be more the norm than an anomaly. Despite the political difficulties inherent in “out of sector” missions, NATO has now linked Alliance member security with terrorism and other threats beyond the borders of Europe and North America.⁸ Broadening the view and scope of NATO engagement beyond the territorial confines of the member nations requires the “concrete steps” alluded to by Secretary General Rasmussen.

The Secretary General pledged at Lisbon that NATO would “slim down, speed up, and become more flexible”⁹ to meet the challenges of the future. Much of the promised reform centered on increasing efficiencies in the NATO command structure, consolidation of various NATO agencies and the headquarters itself.¹⁰ Although an admirable attempt, it is unlikely that reducing redundancy in various military and political organs of the Alliance will substantially improve its efficiency. The expansion of NATO’s mission and the evolution of the Alliance require, as stated in the Strategic Concept, a “unity, solidarity, strength and resolve”¹¹ that will not come from “rearranging the deck chairs.”

True reform of the Alliance can lead to greater efficiency, but this efficiency is born of greater unity and solidarity. The 28 nations comprising the Alliance must improve cooperation and communication to meet the challenges of the future and meet the goals of their new Strategic Concept. Today's strategic landscape is complex and dangerous. The NATO Strategic Concept is a more than adequate framework to address the difficulties present. As NATO looks to forge external partnerships to strengthen its position on the global stage, it must also look internally and strengthen the bonds that hold it together. In spite of a number of difficult obstacles, NATO is able to improve its ability to not only survive, but also thrive in the future.

Obstacles to Success

Many obstacles lay in the path of strengthening the Alliance toward achieving the goals articulated at Lisbon. Perceptions of American hubris have caused significant divides among NATO allies. Divisions between European members of the Alliance and the inherent schizophrenia caused by competing interests related to the European Union (EU) further complicate internal affairs in NATO. Additionally, the increasing importance of political power within NATO and its overshadowing of the military aspects have complicated formerly less complex relationships of the previously bipolar nature of the strategic environment. Overcoming these obstacles to a more cohesive relationship among the member states is essential to fortifying NATO to succeed in the future.

As early as the 1990s, the political dynamic between the United States and her NATO allies began to show significant strain. In the opinion of some allies, America had ceased leading within the alliance, had rather begun to act as a hegemon, and was running roughshod over the other members.¹² These differences first appeared in internecine conflicts over targeting decisions during the Kosovo air campaign and were

further complicated by American unilateral action in Iraq. Impolitic announcements by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, referring to “Old Europe” only fuelled a growing fire within the Alliance. To many the United States had become an empire that used “NATO...to engage strategic zones and states to acquire more spokes to spin around its hub.”¹³ America’s actions and demonstrated attitudes have placed her at odds with her closest friends, contributed to a growing anti-Americanism in Europe, and thus weakened the alliance.

NATO has suffered from a growing gap between the policies of the United States and those of the other member states. The lack of real or perceived cooperation and collaboration has placed America and her closest friends at odds, thus weakening the alliance. According to recent polling, much of Europe believes that the United States, through its NATO leadership, dragged the alliance into a costly war in Afghanistan without adequate consultation or concern for European opinion.¹⁴ Whether fact or fiction, this perception continues to color American relations with our closest allies. This same polling also suggests that America’s NATO allies feel entitled to more influence than the United States has been willing to grant in recent years.¹⁵ Only the United States can take action to correct this situation and improve the cohesiveness and potential of NATO.

Since 2002, European favorable opinion of the United States decreased significantly. This public upswing of anti-American sentiment has translated into an anti-NATO sentiment. Over the same period, public opinion in most European NATO nations has markedly increased in the judgment that the European Union should assume a greater role in security affairs.¹⁶ Little extrapolation is required to conclude that the

primary difference between the European Union and NATO is the perception of American leadership in the latter and European primacy in the former.

Negative perceptions of American leadership are not limited to European public opinion. As previously mentioned, significant divides have emerged since 1995 over operations in Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan. At the fore is an impression that the United States uses its leadership to veto operational decisions that it does not like or does not wish to debate with other member nations.¹⁷ NATO members see the United States, embodied by the SACEUR, as seeking multilateral dialogue and solutions only when a unilateral solution is not available. Changing European perceptions, public and within the alliance, is a significant hurdle that must be crossed in order to strengthen the Alliance.

Obstacles to strengthening the Euro-Atlantic Alliance are not limited to discontentment between the United States and her European partners, but also derive from European internal conflict. In the opinion of Simon Serfaty, noted NATO Scholar and Zbigniew Brzezinski Chair in Global Security and Geopolitics at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), the key to revitalizing and improving the NATO security architecture is first an intra-European debate.¹⁸ With the recent full reintegration of France into the military structure of NATO, Europe's largest economic and military powers are now members of both NATO and the EU. Although one may intuitively believe that this would strengthen relationships between the capitals in Europe, on the contrary it has brought internecine difficulties resident in the EU to the doorstep of NATO.

The differences in approach to security issues between NATO's European states are real and deeply rooted in history and geopolitical concerns.¹⁹ The largest and most powerful of these nations, the United Kingdom, France and Germany, represent some of the most diverse opinions in the EU. Debates over the primacy of the EU formulated European Security and Diplomatic Policy (ESDP) versus NATO security policy put Britain at odds with France and Germany. Competition over limited military resource allocation between the Alliance command structure and the proposed EU Operational Headquarters (EU OHQ) has caused friction between Paris and London. German resistance to NATO-originated "hard power" as a "smart power" compliment to EU-originated "soft power" options have long been a source of tension with her NATO allies on both sides of the Atlantic ocean.²⁰ Rectifying internal division between European members of NATO is important to strengthening the Alliance and essential to meeting the objectives established in Lisbon.

Despite the internal tension within the European block of NATO, another obstacle to continuity within the Alliance is the gap between NATO and the EU. The Union has become a powerful instrument for harnessing European potential within NATO. Whatever the national interests or desires that cause conflict between European members of NATO and EU, the decision to act in a given situation is made through the EU.²¹ Since 21 of NATO's 28 members are also conjoined with the EU, it is essential that a close and meaningful relationship be maintained between the two organizations. As specified in the NATO Strategic Concept, "NATO and the EU can and should play complimentary and mutually reinforcing roles in supporting international peace and security."²² As previously mentioned, this may be easier said than done considering the

complicated relationships between the United States and Europe, as well as the divisions internal to the EU itself.

Discontinuity between NATO (specifically the United States) and the EU is viewed by many as the most problematic impediment to strengthening NATO. The United States has long been viewed as the primary guarantor of security within the Alliance. In recent years, this view in the eyes of our European partners has morphed from one of valued benefactor to not-so-benevolent dictator. Noted political scientist, John McCormick, offers that differences between the United States and the EU put the future of the Alliance in doubt. The root of the problem according to McCormick lies with an American tendency toward military solutions to problems, often unilaterally executed, and the European desire for multilateralism and civilian means for conflict resolution.²³ A perception continues in NATO that the United States leads by "...making American strategic judgments unilaterally, and then expecting European countries to act in support merely because they are expected to be loyal allies."²⁴ With a growing self-confidence and self-reliance through the auspices of the EU, and its self-perceived status as a "superpower"²⁵ in its own right, Europe may not see the value in maintaining its relationship with her partner across the Atlantic.

In the same vein, many in the United States hold the belief that NATO membership limits American power. In the wake of the controversial run-up to the American-led invasion of Iraq, a number of conservative pundits suggested and gained vociferous support for a withdrawal from NATO deeming it "worthless."²⁶ The combination of American hubris stemming from unchallenged military power and its resulting anti-American sentiment, coupled with the growing power of the EU "by virtue

of what it represents, whether that is economic opportunity, political influence, or moral credibility”²⁷ contribute to a growing schism that must be repaired if the Alliance is to thrive.

A related hindrance to Alliance accord is a belief that the United States fails to properly align its words and deeds. Many scholars, including Georgetown professor David M. Edelstein, believe that unfavorable world opinion of the United States derives from a lack of continuity between espoused values and enacted American policy. As acknowledged in the National Security Strategy, “some methods employed in the pursuit of our security have compromised our fidelity to the values that we promote, and our leadership on their behalf.”²⁸ In short, the United States speaks of equity, fairness and democratic practices but in actuality, it often unilaterally enacts self-interested policies. This perception erodes trust of the United States within the Alliance and contributes to discord.

The unity, solidarity, strength and resolve called for in the NATO Strategic Concept require the member nations to overcome the obstacles preventing these objectives. Some of the barriers to closer cooperation within NATO are internal disagreements between the member states, but the most difficult obstructions are related to negative perceptions of the United States and its relations with her European partners. While a panacea rarely exists, it is possible that a viable and useful solution rests with the United States and her perceived military leadership within the Alliance.

A Prescription

Finding a single remedy for all of the ills of NATO is quite unlikely, although it is possible that a major step forward in the direction of building the necessary cohesion and effectiveness is readily available. To paraphrase the words of Astronaut Neil

Armstrong, one small step for the United States could lead to a giant leap for NATO. Were America to forego the continued monopoly on the SACEUR post, it very well may provide an ability to reduce, if not surmount, many of the obstacles hindering NATO's ability to meet the goals promised in Lisbon.

Since 1950, the North Atlantic Council (NAC) has asked the President of the United States to nominate an American officer to fill the post of Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR).²⁹ Beginning with General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower, the American monopoly on the top military post in NATO has survived without challenge. Despite this traditional assignment of an American general/flag officer, the final decision on which nation fills the SACEUR post rests solely with the NAC.³⁰ As a balance to the United States' leading role in the command structure, NATO has for the vast majority of its history selected a European to serve as Secretary-General, the top political post, and as Chairman of the Military Staff, who is in actuality the senior military advisor to the NAC.³¹

Despite the fact that the Chairman of the Military Staff, currently an Italian general officer, holds the top military post within the Alliance, the post of SACEUR remains the most visible and prestigious. Likewise, the SACEUR has a *de jure* peer in the Supreme Allied Commander, Transition (SACT). Formerly the Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic (SACLANT), this post, currently held by a French general officer, serves as the counterpart to the SACEUR, reporting to the Military Staff within his own jurisdiction. Notwithstanding the structural realities and positional authorities, the SACEUR has sustained a public perception as the leading military authority in the Alliance.

Although the SACEUR is not the top military officer within the Alliance, he does maintain a great deal of operational authority as the commander of Allied Command – Operations. Since the 2004 reorganization of the NATO command structure, the Alliance’s three operational commands report through the SACEUR to the Military Staff at NATO Headquarters. This decision was taken, in part, to address European concerns that the United States may loosen its ties to the Alliance if an American, in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, did not lead its operational forces.³²

In the 60-year history of the SACEUR post, many changes have occurred in the command structure, operating environment, and reasoning behind the selection of specific officers to hold the title but, one aspect has remained constant. The SACEUR has always been an American and it is quite unlikely that the NAC would decide to fill the SACEUR position with an officer from another nation without the explicit approval and backing of the President of the United States. The situation in which the Alliance finds itself today is far different from that in 1950 or even 2001. Making a change to the nationality of the SACEUR is a possible, if not a simple change, that could lead to valuable benefit for the Alliance.

As previously noted, there is no *de jure* requirement for an American SACEUR. The assignment of an American officer as the SACEUR is a matter of tradition reflecting the size and scope of the United States’ past contributions to the military arm of the alliance. The NATO command structure provides for two Supreme Allied Commanders, one for operations and one for transformation. The SACEUR is the military leader of the Allied Command-Operations, while the SACT leads Allied Command-Transformation. The SACT position serves as a test case for the feasibility of a non-American SACEUR.

Prior to 2009, the United States also maintained a traditional monopoly on the SACT/SACLANT post. With the return of France to the military command structure, the NAC determined that a nominee provided by the member nations and approved by the council would fill the post. This process, first exercised in the summer of 2009, selected a French general officer as the first non-American SACT. Undoubtedly, a similar process is completely feasible for a change in the SACEUR post.

Value of a Non-American SACEUR

Beyond determining that a non-American SACEUR is possible, one must assess the benefits of such a move. As previously discussed, a number of obstacles stand in the way of a more united and useful NATO. Since the end of the Cold War, a growing perception of hubris and American imperialism has persisted in the minds of both our allies and other nations around the world. Much of Europe's political culture has become self-consciously different and sometimes even hostile to that of America.³³ In the United States, domestic opinion has also been shaped by these political differences, leading many to question the value of the Alliance.³⁴ This divergence is detrimental to the long-term effectiveness of NATO. Accepting the value of a strong and united NATO, it is incumbent on the United States to evaluate the causes of conflict within the Alliance and make changes to address the issues.

A European SACEUR provides significant opportunities and possibilities that cannot be realized by an American holding the same position. Addressing issues such as anti-Americanism and divergence between the EU and NATO policy is best acted upon with a European face rather than through the auspices of the United States. Not only could a European commander of the NATO operational military structure lessen

current impediments to cohesion, he could also open new doors for the Alliance and the United States.

Combating anti-Americanism within the Alliance is a critical first step to building solidarity among the member states. At the root of anti-American feeling in Europe is the notion of 'American exceptionalism – in essence, the idea that the United States does not have to play by the same rules as everyone else.³⁵ Countering this perception in Europe requires the United States to foster a sense of reciprocal multilateralism and a concerted effort to treat her European allies as co-equal partners.³⁶ The American assumption that it must lead wherever it is involved is problematic in the minds of many Europeans and contributes to a sense of inequality. Supporting the installation of a European SACEUR demonstrates a self-constraint by the United States that institutionalizes an apparently deliberative process and perceptively levels the playing field within the NATO military structure.³⁷ Such an action will go a long way toward fostering a perception of partnership and equity of opinion, which is essential to promoting a more positive impression of the United States through multilateral reciprocity.

An increased sense of multilateral reciprocity, as embodied by a European SACEUR, will also help to narrow the divide between the EU and NATO. The current 'two pillar' (the United States and EU) approach to aligning security strategy in Europe has frequently led to a 'coherence deficit' stemming from European policy development through the EU and the United States injecting its views as NATO policy.³⁸ In essence, the twenty-one members of the EU and NATO get one vote through the good offices of the EU while the United States maintains a "super vote" as the voice of NATO. To many

European states, specifically the French, this remains a major obstacle to aligning ESDP and NATO policy. The desire by France and other European nations is to bring the EU and NATO policy together through a sense of 'necessary partnership' rather than 'traditional allies' is hindered by America's dominant role in NATO's operational command structure.³⁹ A SACEUR who's nation speaks with one voice in both NATO and the EU is likely to open the door toward a more unified security policy between the two partner organizations.

A European SACEUR also opens the door toward improved relations with Russia. As declared by the NATO Heads of State in Lisbon, "We want to see a true strategic partnership between NATO and Russia."⁴⁰ Since the end of the Cold War first offered an opportunity for improved United States-Russia relations, a few perceptions held by Russia have limited the development of a solid partnership. The perception of an American-led encroachment upon the Russian sphere of influence through NATO expansion, as well as proposals for a European-based "missile shield" have fostered a continued adversarial relationship. American and NATO troop presence in former Soviet Central Asia exacerbates negative perceptions and fuels anti-American sentiment among Russian military and political elites.⁴¹ Many in Russia continue to view NATO as an essentially anti-Russia alliance.

Easing Russian concerns over an American-led alliance focused on countering Russian interests is imperative to improving United States-Russia relations. While Russia is "drawn toward the European Union's gravitational pull",⁴² it desires to remain at arm's length from NATO. The central difference between the varying Russian perceptions is the impression that NATO is led by an aggressive America, while the

European Union is under more pliable European leadership. A change in NATO military leadership has the potential for two positive gains. First, under a “cooperative” European leader, Russia may very well be more likely to collaborate with a “less aggressive” NATO. Removing the American brand from the SACEUR position may go a long way toward breaking the ‘zero sum game’ paradigm inherent to US-Russian relations and Russia’s perception of NATO.⁴³ Positive signs toward increased NATO-Russian cooperation have become visible in recent weeks. The new NATO Strategic Concept commits to “political consultations and practical cooperation with Russia in areas of shared interests.”⁴⁴

Second, beyond improved relations between NATO and Russia, a non-American SACEUR could contribute to improving the bilateral relations between the US and Russia. Removing the American face from NATO initiatives, viewed by Russia as antagonistic to her vital interests, while peripheral to the United States’, can help reduce animosity and increase cooperation.⁴⁵ Additional cooperation will be necessary to conclude agreements of greater interest to the United States, such as those on missile defense and nuclear weapons reduction. To achieve these ends the United States will need to foster a greater sense of cooperation and meet Russia’s expectation for reciprocal concessions and respect.

Identifying the potential derived from an American relinquishment of the SACEUR post in favor of a European does little to assuage the fears held by many of such a seemingly radical change in the command structure. On the surface, the benefit gained from a change in leadership does not outweigh the potential risk. But on balance, the true risk to American interests is small.

Addressing Perceived Risk

The risks involved in the United States forgoing the SACEUR billet are mostly perceived and not real. The SACEUR, though arguably the most prestigious military post, is not in fact the top military officer or advisor within the Alliance. A concern of many in American government and policy circles relates to potentially unfavorable perceptions by the American public and the overall acceptability of relinquishing the SACEUR post. As previously discussed, the American monopoly on the SACEUR post is tradition and not derived from a specified article of the NATO Charter. This tradition originates from three points of view,

1) the United States remains the strongest military power within the Alliance; 2) having an American officer in charge of the Alliance's military operations symbolizes the continuing commitment of the United States to the defense of Europe and reassures those European nations concerned about potential threats to their security; 3) nuclear weapons remain the ultimate weapon of deterrence for the Alliance, and because the bulk of these weapons come from the United States, it is important to have an American officer in command.⁴⁶

In fact, none of the above stated points changes if the United States no longer holds the SACEUR post. The United States military capabilities are unchallengeable in the near-term and its contributions to the alliance are not tied in any way to the SACEUR position. The American SACEUR also serves as the Commander of United States European Command, which essentially commands and controls all American contributions to NATO missions within Europe and the North Atlantic.

Whether the SACEUR is American or not, United States Forces stationed in Europe and available to NATO remain so due to commitments to the Alliance and without regard to the nationality of the SACEUR. Finally, the notion that nuclear deterrence is in any way tied to a military officer is inaccurate. Employment of these

weapons, whether American, French or British, remains a decision for the chief executive of the possessing nation and is a matter of the highest national interest. These decisions are not made by the SACEUR, regardless of his nationality, but are taken by the civilian leaders of the various nations comprising the NAC. As clearly articulated in the Strategic Concept, NATO is “the globe’s most successful political-military Alliance.”⁴⁷ Political is first and foremost.

Another prevalent concern in the United States is the fear of placing American troops under foreign control. This concern, within the context of NATO, has been frequently and recently proven to be without merit. Despite the nominative “command” under which forces serve in the Alliance, true authority remains with the home nation. Demonstrated frequently during NATO operations in the Kosovo air campaign, contingents refused orders of the SACEUR that conflicted with national directives without consequence.⁴⁸ More recently during NATO operations in Afghanistan, limits on operational command have manifested themselves in “the ultimate ‘opt-out’ card: the national caveat.”⁴⁹ Although these options have been used by European troop formations under American control, the same procedure is open to the United States when her troops are serving under non-American command. While the NATO command structure provides for an exceptional means for standardizing procedures and coordination of effort, unmitigated command is not part of the equation and the risk of American troops being “forced” to conduct operations contrary to the political desires of the nation is non-existent.

Another concern that is in actuality non-existent is the European fear that an American policy to surrender the SACEUR post would decouple the United States from

Europe. President Obama clearly articulated the need for strengthening alliances as fundamental to our national security strategy. Security is rooted in the collective actions, mutual interests, and effective burden sharing of the United States and her friends and allies. The most important and capable of these alliances is NATO.⁵⁰ As repeatedly expressed by the United States Ambassador to NATO, Ivo Daalder, the United States is committed to Europe because, “We cannot deal with threats that are out there by ourselves. It requires us to work with others. Our best option is to work through institutions like NATO.”⁵¹ The belief that NATO remains valuable to the United States and provides legitimacy that cannot come from coalitions of the willing is central to America’s commitment to Europe.⁵²

America’s commitment to continued engagement in Europe remains a vital component to United States national security. The United States and her allies remain determined that NATO maintain its essential role in ensuring common defense and security.⁵³ United States-European cooperation is vital to managing peace and through coordination and consensual agreement remains ready to respond to crisis.⁵⁴ A mutual, co-equal relationship within the Alliance and its military command structure is an important step forward in strengthening this most important of Alliances.

Conclusion

Without question, strengthening NATO is in the best interest of the United States, Europe and likely the entire world community. Now that the member nations of the world’s most successful and enduring political-military alliance have recommitted themselves to defend their universal and perpetual values through unity, solidarity, strength and resolve⁵⁵, it is time that tangible steps are taken to meet these objectives. A number of obstacles remain on the path to achieving the goals set forth at Lisbon in

November 2010. Many of these impediments stem from negative perceptions of the United States and past policies of previous administrations. The Obama Administration has publicly voiced a desire to break from the past and take proactive actions to forge partnerships with our closest friends.

The United States has a unique ability and responsibility to take necessary action to facilitate stronger partnerships. By taking action that is perceived to self-limit its own power and provide a larger, if not equal, voice to Europe, the United States enables a much more cohesive and unified Alliance. A physically small, but perceptibly great act on the part of the United States is to forgo the future assignment of the SACEUR and to support the nomination of a general or flag officer from one of her European allies. The perception of increased equity within the Alliance command structure could be a significant contributing factor in fulfilling this goal and may be accomplished without the United States appearing to have abandoned NATO. By relinquishing the monopoly on the highly prestigious post of SACEUR and entering into an Alliance-wide nominative process for another of the top posts, Chairman of the Military Committee or SAC-T, America remains visibly engaged in the top levels of the Alliance but on a more equal footing with her partner nations. The potential strengthening of the Alliance through this act is a win for NATO and a win for the United States.

End Notes.

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